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President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 41

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/114)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.4)

Mr. Limeres (Argentina): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 41, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

At the outset, I would like to welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodriguez Parrilla.

Last year, the announcements made by the Government of the United States related to a relaxation of certain restrictions on travel and the transfer of remittances had given many of us hope that steps were starting to be taken in the right direction. Nevertheless, one year has since passed and it is clear that those measures have had a very limited effect and that the embargo is still in place.

In fact, the embargo remains largely unchanged and continues to impose severe economic and financial restrictions on Cuba. The embargo has caused, and continues to cause, a high degree of economic and financial damage, which has a negative impact on the well-being of the people of Cuba.

Furthermore, the deepening impact of the ongoing global economic and financial crisis and the continued embargo by the Government of the United States will contribute to further aggravating the hardships of the people of Cuba. Moreover, the embargo frustrates efforts towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and negatively affects regional cooperation in that area.

The Group of 77 and China states once again, as it has on many previous occasions, that the embargo against Cuba contravenes the fundamental norms of international law, international humanitarian law, the United Nations Charter and the rules and principles governing peaceful relations among States. Its continued imposition violates the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention and non-interference in each other's domestic affairs.

The Group of 77 and China has always been firmly against the embargo. At the second South Summit, held in Doha from 12 to 16 June 2005, heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China firmly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries. They called upon the Government of the United States to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which, in addition to being unilateral and contrary to the United Nations Charter

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and international law — and to the principle of good-neighbourliness — causes huge material loses and economic damage to the people of Cuba.

Today, the Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate once again its long-standing position on this important matter by quoting the ministerial declaration of the thirty-fifth annual meeting of our Ministers for Foreign Affairs, held here at Headquarters on 23 September:

> "The Ministers firmly reject the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries, and reiterate the urgent need to eliminate them immediately. They emphasize that such actions not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. They therefore called on the international community neither to recognize these measures nor apply them." (*A/66/388, annex, para. 39*)

We recall that last year 187 Member States voted in favour of the draft resolution introduced by Cuba (resolution 65/6). That number represented a large majority of the international community demanding the end to the five-decades-old embargo and to fully adhere to the principles of mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of a sisterly country.

The Group of 77 and China is committed to working towards a better world for all in which nations, large or small, can coexist peacefully. The achievement of such peaceful coexistence among nations requires adherence by all nations to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the peaceful conduct of relations among nations. The achievement of such peaceful coexistence among nations requires adherence by all nations to the rule of law, including international law.

The Group of 77 and China will again fully support draft resolution A/66/L.4 against the embargo and urges all Member States to do so as well.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Before giving the floor to the next speaker, given the long list of speakers inscribed on my list, I should like to propose that the list of speakers for the debate on this item now be closed. Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to this proposal.

It was so decided.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I have the pleasure to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the 120 Members of the United Nations that are members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I would like first to extend our deep condolences to the Government and people of Turkey for the tragic loss of life as a result of the devastating earthquake that struck the eastern part of Turkey two days ago. We extend our condolences also to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the passing away of His Royal Highness Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

Allow me now to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and to express to him the Movement's full support and solidarity.

It has been 12 months since we last gathered here in the Hall to consider and debate the important agenda item "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". Those 12 extraordinary months have witnessed unexpected and profound changes in many parts of the world, all sparked by an entrenched longing for justice that has been for too long unduly denied. It is the Movement's deep conviction that the application of the principle of justice should not be confined to the national level but should also be extended to the international arena. It should not only govern relations between individuals but also between Member States.

Did the peoples of the United Nations not declare in its Charter's preamble their determination to "establish conditions under which justice ... can be maintained"? It is for that reason that the Non-Aligned Movement finds it utterly troubling that to this day the screws of an unfair and unwarranted blockade, which has been in force for over half a century, are still being tightened against one of the Movement's members, and that unilateral measures and coercive laws are still being adopted and implemented against it.

The Movement unequivocally rejects such blatant violations of multilateralism, which run counter to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the norms

of international law, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, good neighbourliness and mutual trust — and the Movement calls for their immediate end. We appeal to all States to continue to refrain from recognizing such measures or laws and to support the claim of affected countries to compensation for any damage incurred as a result of this breach of internationally agreed norms of conduct.

The Non-Aligned Movement once again reiterates its call for full respect by all Member States of the crucial principle of justice in international relations. The Movement also reaffirms its steadfast commitment to uphold, preserve and promote all purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, as well as to ensure the continued viability of all the provisions of international law, which together form the core of our multilateral work and inspire our collective efforts to maintain peace and security, achieve inclusive economic growth and sustainable development and ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The United States Administration has in the past claimed that it would reach out to the Cuban people and engage with them. Yet those once-encouraging words have regrettably not been translated into concrete actions. The punitive measures imposed against the whole Cuban nation persist, and with them the enduring suffering of its brave people.

The direct and indirect damage caused by the embargo against Cuba are enormous. They affect all crucial sectors of the economy, including those most vital for the well-being of the Cuban people themselves, such as public health, nutrition and agriculture, as well as banking, trade, investment and tourism. It is true that Cuba has made significant progress in many areas, especially in education, health care and gender equality — and we salute the Cubans for what they have achieved so far despite the huge difficulties they encounter — yet we stress once again that the embargo imposed continues to impede socio-economic advances and creates unnecessary economic hardship.

Moreover, this unilateral blockade has an extended negative effect on companies and citizens from third countries, thereby violating their sovereign rights. The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its deep concern at the harmful impact on other countries of widening the extra-territorial nature of the embargo, which we consider an added argument in favour of the prompt elimination of those unfounded sanctions.

The Non-Aligned Movement is astounded as to why such an unjust and unfounded embargo is still maintained when 187 Member States of the United Nations voted last year in favour of resolution 65/6, calling for its immediate lifting — the nineteenth such resolution to be adopted by the Assembly on the issue. Why are such punitive measures maintained when evidence indicates that they hinder Cuba's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development? Why should the Cuban people continue to suffer when the international community is almost unanimous in its conviction that the cause of their anguish is unjustified and illegal?

In reality, there are no credible answers to these questions, because the embargo imposed against Cuba is simply politically and economically untenable and, above all, morally indefensible. It is for those reasons that the Non-Aligned Movement once again urges the United States of America to immediately and fully comply with all General Assembly resolutions calling for an immediate end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba and, once and for all, to listen to the will of the overwhelming majority of the international community, which will today vote in favour of the of the draft resolution on the necessity of ending the embargo against Cuba.

During his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech in Norway in December 2009, President Barack Obama asserted that "Our actions matter, and can bend history in the direction of justice." The President of the United States had also declared a few months earlier, during a trip to Latin America in April 2009, that "the United States seeks a new beginning with Cuba". Today, the Movement once again urges the United Sates to match those words with action by swiftly lifting the unjust embargo it is imposing against Cuba, thereby allowing the arc of history to bend towards justice in international relations and enabling the valiant people of Cuba to fully prosper and enjoy their sovereignty, independence and right to self-determination.

Mr. Kamau (Kenya): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group, which aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of the Non-Aligned Movement. We wish to acknowledge the presence of His Excellency Mr. Bruno

Rodriguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the agenda item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/66/114). Over the years, the General Assembly, while deliberating on this agenda item, has categorically and overwhelmingly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact. Africa shares the views expressed by the international community in its continued opposition to the sanctions and embargo against Cuba.

The General Assembly has also called upon all States, in conformity with their obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law, to refrain from promulgating and applying, as well as to repeal or invalidate, laws and measures that have extraterritorial effects affecting the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and the freedom of trade and navigation. Repeated calls by the international community to that effect remain unheeded. The sad, tragic and decades-old United States embargo on Cuba, including its extraterritorial aspects, continues to remain in force.

In the report of the Secretary-General of 16 August, the majority of United Nations Members, including from the African continent and various United Nations entities, categorically rejected the imposition of the embargo on Cuba and called for its lifting.

Given their proximity, Cuba and the United States of America should be natural partners in trade, commerce and investment. Given the large number of Americans of Cuban extraction, Cuba and the United States should also enjoy warm and fraternal relations in social and cultural affairs between their populations. The potential for those economic, commercial and cultural ties between the two nations has, however, sadly remained unrealized.

Whatever the historical roots of this intergenerational embargo imposed on Cuba, surely the time has come when, in a globalized, interdependent world, nations ought to find the courage, the foresight and the sense of global citizenry and leadership that would help to drive the resolve to overcome differences and nurture coexistence in a manner that speaks to the high global ideals of the international community in the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Africa's opposition to unilateral measures that impinge on the sovereignty of another country, including attempts to extend the application of a country's laws extraterritorially to other sovereign nations. The heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU), at their meeting in July in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, reiterated the AU Summit's earlier call on the Government of the United States of America to lift the long-standing and unjustifiable economic and trade embargo imposed on Cuba, and thereby enable it to enjoy all the legitimate prospects for its sustained development.

Once again, Africa calls for the complete and unequivocal lifting of sanctions and the embargo against Cuba.

Mrs. Coye-Felson (Belize): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which also aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

CARICOM member States continue to reiterate their unequivocal opposition to the United States' imposition of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, an embargo that the overwhelming majority of the international community has consistently opposed for the past 19 years. The unilateral imposition of extraterritorial laws on third States is contrary to both the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Charter, and the embargo itself runs counter to the principles that the United Nations and all Member States have traditionally championed: the principles of multilateralism, international law, sovereignty and free trade.

The stubborn persistence of the embargo is apparently impervious to the sustained chorus of international criticism and to the logic of a world that has changed immeasurably over the five decades since the imposition of the blockade. The embargo has now outlived the cold war by 20 years. It has outlasted the terms of eight Presidents of the United States of America and even that of Cuban President Fidel Castro. More than 70 per cent of Cubans alive today were born under the embargo. CARICOM considers the embargo an anachronism that has succeeded only in

contributing to the suffering of generations of ordinary Cubans and in unnecessarily increasing tensions between the United States and Cuba. It serves no justifiable legal, political or moral purpose in the twenty-first century.

The punitive embargo is of particular concern to CARICOM, which shares a history, culture, solidarity and kinship with the people of Cuba. Cuba is the most populous State of the Caribbean region and an integral part of the pan-Caribbean process. Caribbean ties with Cuba have historical significance, cemented by years of active cooperation at various levels. CARICOM member States continue to maintain close relations with Cuba through a wide range of programmes of cooperation in areas including trade, health care, infrastructure and human resource development. In many ways, our future regional development is reliant upon our collective advancement and progress. In that context, the embargo is not just a punitive act against Cuba, but an impediment to our shared regional development in the wider Caribbean.

This year's report of the Secretary-General (A/66/114) on the implementation of the resolution on this issue, like previous reports on this matter, outlines responses from the vast majority of Member States, which share a common perspective on the continued unilateral embargo against Cuba. Indeed, the report makes clear that the embargo even affects the manner in which organs and agencies of the United Nations system carry out their work in Cuba.

CARICOM member States therefore, in reaffirming the positions of the Group of 77 and China as well as the Non-Aligned Movement, maintain that constructive engagement and peaceful negotiations are the only acceptable means of advancing long-term peace and stability.

There is probably no single issue upon which the United Nations has made such sustained, strong and unambiguous pronouncements as with the resolutions condemning the embargo against Cuba. Yet the embargo continues, in the face of overwhelming international reproach. The continued disregard of these resolutions represents a blot on the credibility and efficacy of the United Nations. CARICOM member States thus reiterate the view that additional mechanisms could be explored to operationalize the words of the resolution and facilitate the process that will end this continued indifference to the will of the international community.

The significance of the embargo for the Cuban economy continues to be of great concern to CARICOM, and the humanitarian impact on the people of Cuba, especially in the area of health care and food, is especially saddening. The inability of Cuba to acquire necessary medical equipment, spare parts and latest-generation medications, because of the embargo, continues to affect the health-care system, where treatment remains free of charge to the Cuban people. With the strengthening and more frequent storms and hurricanes wrought by climate change, and Cuba's geographic susceptibility to such natural disasters, the humanitarian impact of the embargo becomes even more acute.

Additionally, construction materials and heavy equipment are becoming increasingly inaccessible to Cuba because of stringent rules of origin and restrictions against corporations based outside of the United States. The negative effects on the Cuban economy and its growth are tangible. The embargo has now cost Cuba over $100 billion since its 1962 imposition. In the wake of the ongoing global economic meltdown, the unilateral measures against the Cuban people are now even more harsh and indefensible.

It is remarkable that, even as Cuba struggles with a recent unfortunate string of natural disasters and the continuing impacts of the global economic crisis, it continues to assist other nations in the developing world, starting with its immediate Caribbean neighbours. Thousands of Caribbean students have attended Cuban universities without charge; thousands more have received free surgeries and medical assistance in Cuba; and thousands have been treated in their home countries by Cuban doctors and nurses. We have benefited from technical expertise, capacity-building programmes and infrastructural assistance, and from the selfless generosity of the Cuban people. The people of Cuba have threatened no one, and neither the embargo nor its deleterious side-effects has prevented them from continually extending a hand of friendship and solidarity, even across ideological divides. On behalf of CARICOM member States, we also take this opportunity to thank the people of Cuba for their tremendous and selfless assistance in the wake of last year's devastating earthquake in Haiti.

Given Cuba's peaceful, generous and cooperative international stance, CARICOM reiterates its support for the right of the Cuban people to self-determination, in a manner beneficial to their social and economic development.

CARICOM member States continue to enjoy friendly relations with both Cuba and the United States. Those two neighbours — a mere 90 miles apart — have produced great scholars, scientists and global leaders. The two countries possess proud and noble histories, and are populated by friendly, open and loving peoples. As such, in spite of a long history of dashed hopes, CARICOM remains guardedly optimistic that a new beginning is possible in the relationship between the Governments of Cuba and the United States. However, we consider the lifting of the embargo to be a prerequisite for any meaningful rapprochement between the two countries, not a negotiated end-result. While there have been some recent positive indications of flexibility, there have also been reminders of unilateral rigidity.

We remain hopeful that the United States' recent recommitment to multilateralism will result an in increased willingness to consider the opinions and concerns of its global friends and partners. On this issue, global opinion could hardly be conveyed in a more convincing or consistent manner. As such, our faith in the recent pronouncements of the United States Government carries with it an expectation that these few remaining historical and unilateral wrongs will be righted expeditiously.

It is within this context that CARICOM member States unstintingly support draft resolution A/66/L.4 on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States of America against Cuba.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): I have the pleasure of delivering the following statement on behalf of the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in my country's capacity as Chair of the OIC Group.

At the outset, I should like to express to Turkey our sympathy and deepest condolences in connection with the devastating earthquake that struck the country last Sunday, causing a number of deaths and widespread damage.

Let me also convey our shared sorrow to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in connection with the demise of His Royal Highness Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Aviation.

I should like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/66/114).

As all are aware, although the United Nations, various international forums and non-governmental organizations have for a long time tirelessly and repeatedly expressed the rejection by the international community of the unilateral sanctions, this issue remains a critical one on the United Nations agenda.

Bearing that in mind, I should like to address this issue once again on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Group in New York.

OIC activities are guided by the principles of international law, and we support the right of every nation to follow its own unique way of development. In this regard, the OIC group condemns any unilateral acts that affect the sovereignty and interests of another State and its people. We do not agree with any external regulations that infringe on, impede or retard the development of any country, including in the economic, commercial and financial spheres.

The OIC wishes to emphasize that the imposition of arbitrary, unilateral laws contradicts the regulations and directions of the World Trade Organization, which prohibit the adoption of measures likely to hinder free international trade and shipping so as to allow the widest possible partnership between the two sides.

Finally, the OIC, like the overwhelming majority of the international community, calls for lifting the embargo on Cuba in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and the appropriate General Assembly resolutions.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for the delegation of Uruguay to speak on behalf of the MERCOSUR States: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay; the acceding State the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; and the associated States Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

I would like to welcome among us the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla.

MERCOSUR was founded on the principles of solidarity, interdependence and good-neighbourliness. We believe that tolerance is the basis that has enabled the historic convergence on our continent of peoples from all corners of the world. We are linked to our Latin American neighbours by the desire to live in peace and to promote mutual understanding, to defend the independence, the equality and sovereignty of States, and to promote respect for international law. Those ideals, which have historically guided relations among the Latin American States and societies, are enshrined in the charter of the Organization of American States.

We regret that the blockade policy against Cuba remains unchanged. We have even seen increased restrictions on Cuba's financial transactions with third countries. We regret that conditionalities once again obstruct the path towards a greater openness to direct dialogue.

The measures announced last year by the American Government with respect to easing restrictions on travel and remittances, among other things, were positively received in this forum, because they were headed in the right direction. Those measures, however, have not brought with them a substantial change in the blockade policy; they are insufficient and have a limited scope.

MERCOSUR and its associated States understand that the embargo against Cuba is contrary to the principles of the United Nations Charter and contravenes the rules of international law, in particular the equality of States, non-intervention in domestic affairs, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the norms of the multilateral trade system, which link the members of the World Trade Organization.

This embargo, which is contrary to the principle of justice and human rights, represents collective punishment that produces shortages and suffering for the population, limits and delays development and seriously harms the Cuban economy.

The MERCOSUR States parties and associated States reject unilateral and extraterritorial measures as a matter of principle. We condemn the application of coercive unilateral measures that are contrary to free trade, cause irremediable damage to people's welfare and obstruct the processes of regional integration.

Reaffirming once more our unwavering support for draft resolution A/66/L.4, MERCOSUR and its associated States reiterate our commitment to multilateralism as a legitimate instrument for the peaceful settlement of disputes and as an effective path in the promotion of international cooperation and understanding among peoples. The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba is an example of obsolete policies that have no place today. By adopting this draft resolution, the Assembly will provide further proof of its unwavering political will in defence of the ideals of freedom, solidarity and respect for sovereignty and international law.

Mr. Ahamed (India): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to address the General Assembly.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We meet yet again to deliberate on the agenda item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba". For all these years, the Assembly has repeatedly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other kinds of coercive economic measures that hurt the progress and prosperity of people the world over.

The Assembly has also called upon States to respect their obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law, and to repeal and invalidate laws and measures that have extraterritorial effects on other States. It is unfortunate that, in spite of the General Assembly's yearly rejection of the United States embargo against Cuba, the embargo remains in full force. We see such enforcement as a violation of world opinion and as an act that severely undermines multilateralism and the credibility of the United Nations itself.

The more than half-century-old United States embargo on Cuba has brought immense suffering to the Cuban people. It has severely undermined the progress and development of the country. The embargo, which

likely has no parallel in history, is a transgression of the right of a sovereign State to development and to enjoy freedom of trade, economy and navigation.

On the one hand, we, the global community, make tall promises with respect to the Millennium Development Goals and on striving for human dignity and achieving equitable growth, but when it comes to actions, we do the exact opposite of what we promise. The embargo has denied a life of dignity and basic standards of living to the people of Cuba. Actions must speak louder than words.

The embargo, particularly through its extraterritorial effects, has adversely affected the economic prosperity of the Cuban people. The global economic slowdown, along with spiralling food and energy prices, has made matters worse. The embargo has denied Cuba access to United States markets, investment, technology and financial services, and to scientific, educational, cultural and sporting institutions. Cuba has had to pay enormous extra costs for sourcing products, technology and services from third countries located thousands of kilometres away.

The extraterritorial application of the United States embargo has discouraged investment, technology transfer and commercial and other forms of business collaborations between Cuba and third countries. The prohibition of technology and related scientific support, particularly through the extraterritorial application of the embargo, has severely impacted health care, a fundamental part of the commitments contained in the Millennium Development Goals, in Cuba. It has also undermined Cuba's ability to provide health assistance to developing countries as part of South-South cooperation.

The report of the Secretary General on the agenda item under consideration (A/66/114) illustrates the detrimental impact that the embargo has had on international efforts to undertake socio-economic progress in Cuba. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Havana has noted the high cost and negative impact of the embargo on the humanitarian and development cooperation implemented by the United Nations system in Cuba.

There is a huge potential for strengthening economic and commercial ties between Cuba and the United States. Taking advantage of limited openings under the United States Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000, the United States has become the largest exporter of agricultural products to Cuba. Congressional efforts in the United States to relax or lift the embargo lend further credence to the annual United Nations resolutions calling for the lifting of the United States embargo against Cuba. People-to-people contacts between the two countries remain severely curtailed.

The steps taken by the United States Administration in January to reduce restrictions on travel and remittances to Cuba are positive developments. However, the United States is far from making a fundamental change in the complex of laws and regulations that form the framework of the embargo against Cuba. Much more needs to be done.

India joins other nations in calling for an immediate end to the United States embargo against Cuba. India supports the draft resolution to be introduced shortly by the representative of Cuba (A/66/L.4).

Mr. Alurralde Tejada (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by stating that Bolivia associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77, and the Southern Common Market.

The Cold War came to an end in 1989, and the fear of a nuclear war that would not only have been the most devastating ever, but would have been the last war ever because it would have led to the end of humankind, vanished. However, now we find ourselves facing other threats, such as climate change, which strike equal fear in our hearts.

However, here at the United Nations we are today discussing a sad aftertaste of the Cold War whose continued existence we still cannot comprehend. On 26 June 1963, President Kennedy addressed the citizens of Berlin in order to tell them that they were living in a fortified island of liberty. That island was defended with all the resources made possible by a blockade, which sought to undermine the city's resistance and was overcome through the establishment of an air bridge organized by the Western Powers. We do not understand how one of the countries that once condemned that blockade with such force today perseveres in maintaining a decades-long blockade against the sisterly Republic of Cuba.

We therefore wish today to refashion the words of President Kennedy for the beloved Cuban people, who are resisting the United States embargo. The emblematic phrase of freedom at that time was "I am a Berliner". We say to the Cuban people that the emblematic phrase for the defence of life in the twentieth century is "I am a Cuban". Only a heroic people determined never to surrender its right to sovereignty and to freely choose its destiny without foreign interference, such as the Cuban people, can serve as inspiration and example to future generations.

I am a Cuban. That is for us, the free peoples of the world, a symbol of pride in our time. Certainly, since the United States imposed its blockade against Cuba, all of us in the Hall, with very few exceptions, is a Cuban. Those who claim that they are defenders of democracy are unaware of the democracy that exists here within the United Nations. How many more times will we have to vote against the blockade for it to be suspended? How many more times will the world have to tell the United States what it thinks of the blockade, with none of our demands being fulfilled? If we truly believe in democracy, then let us start by heeding the will of the countries represented here in the Hall.

For all of those reasons, the Plurinational State of Bolivia thanks the Secretary-General for his report dated 16 August (A/66/114) and fully supports the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.4.

Mr. De Alba (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed report on this issue (A/66/114), which once again highlights the international community's broad rejection of the embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. For the twentieth consecutive time, the Government of Mexico returns to this forum to repeat its opposition to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba and to reiterate its opposition to the use of coercive measures that are in violation of international law, which therefore have no basis in the Charter of the United Nations.

The application of unilateral extraterritorial measures in third countries leads to severe humanitarian consequences that blatantly contradict the objectives that supposedly inspire them. They also represent a rejection of negotiation, diplomacy and dialogue as the appropriate means to resolve disputes between States.

Various organs and entities in the United Nations system have documented the negative impact of the embargo on Cuba's economic and social development, as has the Secretary-General's report. Its damaging effects are evident in Cuba's economic, commercial and financial transactions. It harms sensitive sectors that directly impact the lives of the people and also has negative repercussions on third countries, due to the difficulty of interacting with Cuba in many economic and social activities.

Mexico has therefore supported all initiatives against the embargo and related unilateral measures, both in the General Assembly and in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and other forums, such as the Organization of American States, the Latin American Economic System, the Ibero-American Summit and the Rio Group. We shall continue to support the inclusion of Cuba in mechanisms for dialogue and for global economic, commercial and financial exchanges, in line with the will and sovereign decisions of that country, in order to promote cooperation and development.

Our close ties with Cuba and the Cuban people, as well as our own convictions, make us understand the urgent need for the blockade to end. We must not forget that political, economic or military sanctions imposed on States may emanate only from the decisions or recommendations of the Security Council or the General Assembly.

For Mexico, multilateralism remains the best route for resolving disputes and guaranteeing peaceful coexistence among States. In the case before us today, the practically unanimous rejection by the international community proves us right. For that reason, Mexico will, as we have always done, support the draft resolution submitted for our consideration in this session.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela endorses the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the Permanent Representative of Uruguay on behalf of the Southern Common Market.

We wish to convey our condolences to the Government of Saudi Arabia on the passing away of Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, as well as

to the Government of Turkey on the earthquake that caused such death and destruction.

We would like to welcome the presence at this meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla.

Member States have issued a nearly universal call in this forum for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo that for more than 50 years has sought to restrict the right of the Cuban people to decide their fate. This is an unequivocal sign that it is necessary to defend the principles of political independence that underlie the Organization. It is shameful that this call has been ignored year after year by those who frequently violate international law.

We reiterate Venezuela's strong rejection of the application of any unilateral measure with extraterritorial effects that violates the rules and principles of international law. We support the various pronouncements made in that regard by numerous forums around the world.

On this occasion, we cannot forget the Cuban citizens Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labatiño, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando González Llorét, who are still detained in the United States for defending their homeland from possible terrorist attacks; likewise, René González, who was released but forced to remain in this country under an unjust regime of supervised release. Just as we demand, in the strongest terms, the end of the blockade against Cuba, we also request the release of these four heroes who remain in prison. Their continued detention contrasts with the freedom that confessed terrorists such as Luis Posada Carriles enjoy in the United States. We appeal for René González to be allowed to return to his homeland and to be reunited with his family.

Although the United States Administration has tried to convince international public opinion that it is promoting a change in its policies towards Cuba, the embargo against the island remains intact.

Both the Torricelli and the Helms-Burton Acts, which prevent trade between Cuba and United States companies and their subsidiaries in third countries, continue in force. So too does the threat of sanctions against entrepreneurs who, availing themselves of the free enterprise policy that the United States Government so much defends, decide to invest in Cuba. President Barack Obama has not taken any measures to ease the commercial blockade, some of which do not require congressional authorization for implementation.

The blockade against Cuba is not an abstract device applied against a Government. On the contrary, it has dramatic impacts on the daily lives of women and men, children and elderly, and it represents a massive violation of the human rights of a dignified and sovereign people.

The blockade negatively affects the quality of life of sick people who must do without drugs or access to high-tech equipment whose sale is prohibited on the island by the United States Administration. The blockade is also felt in the obstacles the Cuban people face in enjoying their basic housing rights, since it prevents the importing of building materials necessary for replacing and repairing the huge number of buildings and homes damaged by hurricanes.

Every year the blockade generates losses in the millions of dollars in Cuba's basic industry — in the sugar industry, in iron and steel and machinery, in tourism. All that affects the quality of life of the Cuban people. A conservative estimate of the direct economic damage caused by the embargo, through December 2009, places it at more than $100.154 billion. That figure would increase to $239.533 billion if it were recalculated based on retail price inflation in the United States. In the face of the blockade and its terrible economic and social consequences, Cuba and the heroic Cuban people have moved forward with a generous policy of cooperation with other countries of the South.

The blockade therefore unquestionably represents the repeated and unilateral denial by one signatory to the Charter of the United Nations of the right to development of another State Member and its people, without any hostilities directed at the aggressor State on the part of the State being attacked. In an international environment characterized by ongoing threats to the sovereignty of States is constantly threatened, and where systematic violations of international law threaten brotherly and cooperative relations between peoples, it is more necessary than ever that we demand the end of the shameful blockade of Cuba.

It is time to end double standards in the application of international justice. We cannot allow the vilification of the weak for being so, or any

toleration of violations on the part of the imperialists of the North. These are the demands of the peoples of the world, echoed by the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela. It is time that the universal cry demanding the lifting of the blockade against the heroic Cuban people be heard. Venezuela therefore supports, in the most resolute terms, the adoption of draft resolution A/66/L.4, which affirms the necessity of ending the blockade imposed by the United States of America on Cuba.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Let me begin by welcoming the report of the Secretary-General on this agenda item (A/66/114).

The Chinese delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

For 19 consecutive years, the General Assembly has adopted by an overwhelming majority resolutions on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America on Cuba, urging all countries to abide by the United Nations Charter and international law and to repeal or invalidate any laws or measures with extraterritorial implications that affect the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, and their freedom of trade and navigation.

Regrettably, however, those resolutions have not been effectively implemented over the years, and the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States has yet to be lifted. Such practices not only severely violate the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, they have also inflicted enormous economic and financial losses on Cuba. According to figures cited in the Secretary-General's report, by December 2010 the economic losses to Cuba resulting directly from the embargo exceeded $975 billion.

The sanctions and embargo have severely hindered the Cuban people's efforts to eradicate poverty, promote economic and social development and meet the Millennium Development Goals. They have violated the Cuban people's basic human right to food, health and education, as well as their right to survival and development, and have affected normal economic, commercial and financial relations between Cuba and other countries. The international community is currently dealing with multiple serious challenges, such as the financial, food and energy crises and climate change, which make the sanctions and embargo against Cuba all the more unreasonable. The international community's call on the United States Government to change its policy, lift the embargo and normalize bilateral relations with Cuba is growing ever louder.

The Chinese Government has always believed that countries should develop mutual relations on the basis of upholding the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and respect for the right of other countries to independently choose their own social system and development path. China is opposed to any unilateral sanctions against other countries by military, political, economic or other means. Meanwhile, China has strictly observed and implemented the relevant General Assembly resolutions. China and Cuba have maintained normal economic, trade and people-to-people exchanges. Friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation in various areas between our two countries has been growing. This is not only in accordance with the desire of both peoples but is also conducive to Cuba's social and economic development.

In today's world, dialogue, exchange and harmonious coexistence represent the mainstream of international relations. Exchanges on an equal footing between countries have become the dominant trend. In the face of differences, dialogue on an equal footing and amicable consultation are the best way of settling disputes. China hopes that the United States will adhere to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, and end its embargo against Cuba as soon as possible. China also hopes that relations between the United States and Cuba will continue to improve in order to improve stability in the Latin-American and Caribbean region.

China will once more vote in favour of the draft resolution (A/66/L.4) submitted by Cuba under this agenda item.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria): Algeria aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the African Group. I would like to welcome and acknowledge the presence in the Hall of His Excellency Mr. Bruno

Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Algeria would once again like to express its deep concern at the continuation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo unilaterally imposed for half a century now by the United States of America on Cuba. The continuing annual adoption by an overwhelming majority of General Assembly Member States of a similar resolution calling for lifting the embargo against Cuba reflects the profound desire of the international community to put an end to this situation, which has lasted far too long.

In accordance with the principles of its foreign policy, Algeria has always condemned the imposition of unilateral acts, extraterritorial regulations that hinder the development of any country, and all coercive economic and trade measures — such as the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which is openly contrary to international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Every Member State should respect the principles of the Charter, including in particular the sovereign equality of States, territorial integrity, non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of any other State.

It is a well-established fact that the embargo affects Cuba's economic growth and impedes its social and human development. In that regard, it is causing huge material losses and economic damage to Cuba, and creating economic hardship, which is exacerbated by the adverse effects of the current global economic and financial crisis, as well as the energy and food crises, which have seriously compromised Cuba's efforts to improve its level of development. That has also affected the food-based safety nets of the Cuban Government, which are instrumental to household food security, as the Secretary-General stated in his report.

According to estimates by the Cuban Government that have been confirmed by the United Nations Development Programme, cumulative direct and indirect losses to the Cuban economy over 50 years have amounted to more than $100 billion.

In accordance with the long-standing position of the Non-Aligned Movement on this issue, Algeria rejects the use of economic measures of coercion and the extraterritorial application of laws on developing countries, and urges the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, in compliance with the General Assembly resolutions adopted annually on this issue.

Accordingly, Algeria will support the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.4, presented by Cuba.

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): At the outset, South Africa would like to align itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Argentina, Egypt and Kenya on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of African States, respectively. My delegation acknowledges the presence of His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, at this meeting of the General Assembly.

The question of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba has been, and continues to be, a persistent problem for the United Nations despite the many calls for its elimination. The Assembly's recorded vote results (see resolution 65/6) at its previous session, of 187 in favour and 2 against the embargo is a clear indication that the time has come for it to be lifted. The untold economic and social suffering of the Cuban civilian population, who bear the brunt of this injustice, must end. My delegation views the continued blockade as a flagrant violation of the principle of the sovereign equality of States and non-intervention and non-interference in their domestic affairs. Furthermore, the blockade constitutes a violation of international law and its imposition shows disregard for the noble and abiding principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is therefore against that backdrop that South Africa has repeatedly joined the majority of countries in expressing opposition to all aspects of the blockade and the unilateral action of the United States of America. South Africa once again reiterates its support for the lifting of the embargo against Cuba.

The situation is further aggravated by the global financial and economic crisis, energy crisis and food crisis, as well as challenges of climate change, which have affected many countries, including Cuba. The embargo directly hinders Cuba's economic recovery and negatively impacts trade, tourism, foreign direct investment and currency transfers. The damage caused

to the Cuban economy is estimated to exceed $975 billion in the future.

South Africa is deeply concerned over the widening of the extra-territorial nature of the embargo and rejects the reinforcement of the measures aimed at its tightening, as well as all other recent measures carried out by the United States of America against the people of Cuba.

My delegation condemns the seizing by the United States, in January, of more than $4.2 million of funding from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which was earmarked for the implementation of cooperation projects with Cuba.

We support the content of the press release dated 18 October by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations concerning the intensification of sanctions and extra-territorial persecution of citizens, institutions and companies in third countries that establish economic, commercial, financial, scientific and technical ties with Cuba. My delegation is strongly opposed to the actions of the United States with regard to fines levied against foreign banking institutions for having conducted operations with Cuba.

The people of South Africa, and Africa in general, have fond memories of the heroic contributions of Cuba to the struggles against colonization, oppression and apartheid. In an attempt to foster trade with Cuba, South Africa is finalizing its proposal to offer a credit line of about $10 million to Cuba. That would be a breakthrough in trade cooperation relations and would reaffirm South Africa's commitment and ongoing support for Cuba.

The international community recognizes Cuba's outstanding work in the areas of health, education and biotechnology in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and the underdeveloped world in particular, and in the world in general. The embargo stifles those outstanding contributions to economic and social development and hinders the betterment of the lives of the poor.

South Africa calls on all Member States to support the lifting of the United States of America's embargo against Cuba and to refrain from recognizing the unilateral measures and laws of a coercive nature that defy the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and norms of international law.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): The General Assembly has discussed for 20 consecutive years the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. Also for 20 consecutive years, by the end of today's meeting the General Assembly will have overwhelmingly adopted another resolution on this issue of common concern. In that connection, my delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Argentina and Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively. We have often heard calls for prompt action by the United Nations and States on issues that concern the international community. After 20 consecutive years of the General Assembly's demand against the backdrop of the half-century embargo, it is obvious that ending the embargo is one of those issues.

Viet Nam shares the view of the international community that the United States should end the embargo against Cuba, a sovereign and peace-loving nation, based on the existing strong legal, political, economic and, as is often talked about these days, humanitarian reasons.

As affirmed in the General Assembly's resolutions on the issue, the policies and measures in pursuit of the embargo against Cuba, including the so-called Helms-Burton Act, are contrary to international law and the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. They hinder the development of friendly relations among nations. The basis of these policies and measures violates the right of a people to self-determination, which includes, among other things, the right to determine their political system and path of development.

The restrictions on trade, finance and even travel continue to have serious, illegal extraterritorial effects on the sovereignty of other States and their legitimate economic interests relating to persons under their jurisdiction, freedom of trade and navigation and efforts towards the equal and just global economic structure that is necessary for the prosperity of every nation. The Government of Cuba estimates that the loss and damage the embargo has caused the Cuban people amounts to nearly $1 trillion. It is a staggering figure, but the suffering the embargo has caused the Cuban people is greater than the mere number, and is especially profound for women and children.

This has also prompted the Ibero-American heads of State and Government to call for an end to the embargo. In the Final Document of the fifteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Egypt in 2009, the heads of State and Government of the Movement

> "reiterated their call to the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba which, in addition to being unilateral and contrary to the United Nations Charter and international law, and to the principle of neighbourliness, is causing huge material losses and economic damage to the people of Cuba."

The discussions we are engaged in and the action that the General Assembly is going to take today are consistent with the desire for cooperation and dialogue that, at the start of this session, permeated the general debate and its theme of the peaceful settlement of disputes. In this regard, we would like to recall the statement made by His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, in the General Assembly just a month ago (see A/66/PV.26), in which he reiterated Cuba's willingness to move towards normalizing relations with the United States, as well as its proposal to begin dialogue aimed at solving bilateral issues, including humanitarian issues, and its offer of cooperation in numerous areas.

For the reasons to which I have referred, Viet Nam will support draft resolution A/66/L.4 under consideration today and strongly urges the United States to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba and begin dialogue with that country.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): A half-century ago, the world was witness to the Cuban spring, an indigenous and popular uprising against a corrupt and brutal dictator. The Cuban people, unassisted by foreign military forces, cast off the shackles of rapacious exploitation and chose for themselves a new and uniquely adapted path of progress, global citizenship and development that was measured not by levels of corporate or individual excess but by its fulfilment of the needs of its citizens, particularly the poor.

Alas, some States did not greet the Cuban spring in the spirit of enthusiasm with which they welcomed, assisted or instigated other, subsequent revolutionary movements. For the past five decades, Cuba has been subject to an economic, commercial and financial embargo whose scale and scope have no parallel in the modern world. For the past 20 years, the international community has spoken in an increasingly unified voice against the continued imposition of that blockade. Today, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines unreservedly aligns itself with the positions expressed by the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China, and the Caribbean Community in again calling for an end to this unjust, immoral and illegal embargo.

By almost any measure, the embargo is an unmitigated failure. It has served only to visit suffering on the Cuban people and as a jingoistic backdrop to a smattering of pandering politicians who value their individual electoral fortunes above integrity, international law and the weight of overwhelming global condemnation.

Today we must ask ourselves: What place does this embargo have in our modern world? And in an interconnected world of open borders and the free movement of people, goods and capital, how can the champions and architects of globalization legislate the isolation of one State, or place extraterritorial restrictions on commerce, global trade and the movement of individuals? How can the electorate of one district, or one constituency, or one country determine the cargo and path of a ship sailing into and out of Cuban waters, or the manner in which banks and corporations of other countries conduct their business with Cuba?

As a developing country heavily dependent on remittances and affected by an international economic meltdown not of our own making, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines finds it inexplicably cruel that any State would seek to limit the amount of money that one family member could bring home to another, or the value of items in a gift parcel, particularly in the midst of this global recession.

Today, there are countries where United States soldiers are heroically fighting and shedding blood in wars, yet United States citizens may travel to those countries, and foreign banks may transact business in them. There are countries whose systems of governance, or whose practices and values, are diametrically opposed to the American way of life. Yet the bonds of trade and mutual respect for sovereignty

supersede those differences, and no embargo exists to impose the ideals of one nation upon another. Only the Cuban embargo remains as the last surviving relic of a Cold War that otherwise exists only in history books and museums. Even if every vicious lie, every unfounded allegation, every spurious and demonstrably false characterization of the Cuban Government were accepted as fact, they would not justify the existence of this embargo in a modern world of interconnection and multilateral engagement.

No country represented here in Hall has the right to tell the United States how to conduct its foreign policy, who its friends should be or how to determine its national interests. Even if such a right existed, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would not presume to exercise it against our cherished friend and neighbour to the north. But every country in the Hall is obligated by the United Nations Charter to oppose instances where national foreign policy decisions morph into violations of international law, or into sustained disregard for the Charter principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the domestic affairs of States.

Among the complex and interlocking system of laws that perpetuate the Cuban embargo is the United States 1996 Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, which makes the easing or lifting of the embargo conditional on a determination that a transitional or new Government is in power in Cuba. I am unaware of any other instance where the principle of regime change is so nakedly codified into the legislation of another country. The Helms-Burton Act has a stated policy objective of installing a "democratically elected Government" in Cuba, and helpfully supplies a congressional definition of what constitutes a democratically elected Government. According to the definition provided, as it appears in section 206 of the Act, a democratically elected Government is one that

> "has made demonstrable progress in returning to United States citizens (and entities which are 50 per cent or more beneficially owned by United States citizens) property taken by the Cuban Government from such citizens and entities on or after January 1, 1959, or providing full compensation for such property".

That is the definition of the democratically elected Government. Whatever the merits of this definition of democracy, the continued application of the Act stands in marked contrast to the words uttered by our esteemed friend and brother President Barack Obama of the United States in his inaugural address to the General Assembly in its general debate. In that address, President Obama rightly stated that

> "Democracy cannot be imposed on any nation from the outside. Each society must search for its own path, and no path is perfect. Each country will pursue a path rooted in the culture of its people and in its past traditions. And I admit that America has too often been selective in its promotion of democracy." (*A/64/PV.3, p. 14*)

We in St. Vincent and the Grenadines heartily endorse and support those words, but words without works are meaningless.

The President of the United States has considerable discretion to ease the crippling restrictions imposed on the Cuban people. We respectfully urge him to consider the full extent of his powers in light of his indisputable commitment to multilateralism, his respect for international law and his well-documented efforts to alleviate the suffering of peoples worldwide.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is aware that our small country, small population and small economy, not to mention the waning military significance of the Caribbean region, have allowed our needs and concerns to be overlooked by those who see the world only through the prism of their own narrow and immediate interests. However, Cuba has remained a staunch and abiding partner in the development of our country, even in times of global hardship. Cuban universities have graduated over 250 Vincentian students and are currently playing host to 150 more, free of charge. Cuban surgeons have performed operations on over 3,000 Vincentian patients, without charging them a penny. Cuban doctors have brought quality medical care and expertise to the most remote areas of our country. Even as we speak, Cuban engineers, architects and workers are labouring alongside Vincentians in the construction of a modern hospital and our very first international airport.

While far wealthier nations and institutions have looked askance at our developmental struggles and offered only dubious prescriptions, platitudes and trite clichés, the Cuban people have rolled up their sleeves and given freely of themselves in a manner that has touched the hearts of the Vincentian people. No dollar

amount can adequately reflect the value of their support, solidarity and partnership, for which the Cuban people have asked nothing in return. Our appreciation cannot be overstated.

Allow me, in closing, to return to the stirring words of President Obama's inaugural United Nations address:

> "The world must stand together to demonstrate that international law is not an empty promise ... (*ibid., p. 11*)
>
> "No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation. No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed ... The traditional divisions between nations of the South and the North make no sense in an interconnected world, nor do alignments of nations rooted in the cleavages of a long-gone Cold War.
>
> "The time has come to realize that the old habits and the old arguments are irrelevant to the challenges faced by our peoples." (*ibid., p. 10*)

Those words embody a promise of change in which we can wholeheartedly believe. Recent events have reminded us that change, like peace, is often hard. But not all aspects of change are hard. Some simply require a modicum of political courage and a willingness to hear not the hackneyed sloganeering of an increasingly narrow and local political interest, but to heed instead the insistent, consistent and overwhelming voice of the international community, friend and foe alike, and indeed, one's own conscience, compassion and common sense.

Mr. Ovsyanko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of Belarus is pleased to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, who is participating in today's meeting.

For many decades, the overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations have spoken in the General Assembly to demand an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo of Cuba imposed by the United States . It is an uncivilized and unconstructive way to handle international disputes.

We are convinced that the policy of the blockade against freedom-loving Cuba is contrary to international law and violates principles and decisions of the United Nations. The unilateral sanctions have a profoundly negative impact on the living standards of the Cuban people, as well as on that country's economic development, especially given the added damage of the current financial and economic crisis and the likelihood of its second wave.

The Republic of Belarus decisively rejects any application by any State of economic and trade measures against another. We stress the intrinsic right of each nation to choose its own model of development. We consider that any unilateral attempts by a single State to modify the domestic political system of another State through economic, political or other measures is unacceptable.

We are convinced that in the current system of international economic relations there should be no place for economic sanctions or other unilateral coercive measures to put economic pressure on a State or its citizens. It is time to realize that a strong people will never relinquish their right to choose. Determining one's own path to development has a precious value.

Today we are going to adopt the twentieth General Assembly resolution that urges the United States to end its unilateral and obsolete embargo against Cuba. We sincerely hope that, on this twentieth attempt, the voice of the General Assembly will finally be heard.

Mr. Khan (Indonesia): At the outset, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made earlier by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As we enter the twentieth year of debate on this agenda item in the General Assembly, Indonesia would like to reiterate its call for the conclusion of the unilateral economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed against Cuba. That unilateral embargo undermines not only the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law, but also the rights of people to life, well-being and development without distinctions of any kind. Moreover, although unilaterally imposed, the embargo has impacted the economic and commercial interests and relations of third countries.

As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (A/66/114), the embargo has severely affected the day-

to-day welfare of Cuban citizens. At a time when the world is facing serious, multifaceted challenges in the economic, food, energy and other development spheres, the embargo poses an unnecessary burden regarding the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and other development goals.

Much has changed since the initial imposition of the embargo. Globalization has created the conditions for true global solidarity and partnership in the community of nations. We believe that lifting the embargo would be in keeping with the spirit of the times. In our view, the time is ripe for relations between the two main parties to be transformed through constructive engagement.

As a member of the international community, Indonesia remains steadfast in its opposition to actions that undermine the principles of the United Nations Charter. We call on all countries to adhere to the principles of equality, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, good neighbourliness and respect for human rights.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): I would like to begin by associating this statement with the statement issued by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on this agenda item.

This is the twentieth consecutive year that we have gathered in this Hall to urge our friend and partner the United States to lift its blockade against the Cuban people. The voices of 187 Members of the United Nations family last year spoke in lockstep unison on this issue. We are positive that we will do so again this year in connection with the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/66/L.4).

The theme of last month's general debate was "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes through peaceful means". We ask our friend and partner the United States of America, a Member with absolute power within our multilateral system, to view its actions with regard to the people of Cuba through the lens of humanity, find peace within itself and reach out to its neighbour Cuba and renew a friendship that has been put on ice for the last five decades.

The world is changing, and changing fast. We speak of rights; let us uphold those rights. We speak of freedom; let us respect other States' freedom to adopt their own political system. We speak of the rule of law; let us conduct ourselves in conformity with international law. We speak of multilateralism; let us do away with unilateralism.

Solomon Islands, as a small island developing State, believes in multilateralism; this is all we have. Solomon Islands commends Cuba for taking the most peaceful path in seeking the unconditional lifting of the blockade through the United Nations. This is the only place where the members of the international community, large and small, gather to ensure that what is moral is upheld, what is right is respected and what must be undone is lifted.

Once again, Solomon Islands will vote in support of the draft resolution calling for the unconditional lifting of the blockade, and calls on all members to support it as well.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's debate of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla.

The Russian delegation would like to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/66/114) presenting the views of Member States, which have unanimously expressed disagreement with and rejection of the unilateral and extraterritorial economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

The position of principle taken by Russia with regard to this draft resolution is well known and remains unchanged. We express total solidarity with the overwhelming majority of the members of the international community, who strongly condemn the trade and economic embargo against Cuba by the United States and call for the earliest repeal of this senseless anti-Cuban practice that runs counter to current international realities.

The anti-Cuba blockade, which has lasted for almost half a century, has clearly demonstrated its inability to influence the sovereign choice of development model made by the Cuban nation. The only consequences of the sanctions have been the deterioration of the living standards of the Cuban population, the creation of artificial barriers to its economic growth, and an infringement of the rights and interests of third countries. Such measures are counterproductive, as they only complicate the quest

for solutions to inter-State disagreements and aggravate an already overloaded and contentious agenda.

For years now, the unilateral, restrictive United States actions against Cuba have had effects that are directly opposite to the outcome sought by the instigators of that policy during the cold war. President Obama's Administration, which raised great and justified hopes regarding the adjustment of the United States policy towards Cuba, has taken only minimal steps in that direction. We hope that the decision of the United States Administration to discontinue certain restrictions on visits by United States citizens to their relatives in Cuba and on the sending of remittances and money orders will be followed by additional steps aimed at normalizing United States-Cuban relations and the final lifting of the embargo.

We strongly believe that this policy, unlike the discriminatory practice of economic strangulation, will contribute to the successful implementation of the progressive social and economic reforms currently being implemented by the Cuban leadership.

Guided by the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations on the inadmissibility of any discriminatory measures relating to or interference into the domestic affairs of States, we deem it necessary to vote in favour of the draft resolution calling for a lifting of the blockade.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.4.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish at the outset to convey our deepest condolences to our Central American brothers, to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to the Republic of Turkey.

On 13 November 1991, the General Assembly took the decision to include in the agenda of its next session a discussion of the item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

That was when the United States, in a cruelly opportunistic manner, was determined to tighten the siege against the island, which was struggling alone as a result of the so-called Torricelli Act, which cut off our trade in medicines and foodstuffs with the subsidiaries of United States companies based in third countries. That was the official act that made public the extraterritorial implementation of the blockade laws against third States.

At that time, it might have seemed impossible that 20 years later the Assembly would still be discussing the same item, which is so closely linked to the right of peoples to self-determination, to international law, to the norms of international trade and to the very reasons for the Organization's existence.

This is one of the items that is traditionally discussed by the General Assembly and gives rise to the greatest number of reiterated statements. It also receives categorical and overwhelming support, clearly demonstrating the uncomfortable isolation of the aggressor country and the heroic resistance of a people that refuses to give up its sovereign rights.

For two decades, the international community has invariably and consistently called for an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba. It has done so by means of the resolutions that are adopted almost unanimously every year, by the dozens of appeals issued by heads of State and delegations that have referred to this item during the high-level general debate of the Assembly, and by the statements made by virtually all international agencies and groups of States, particularly those of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 1996, the Helms-Burton Act led to an unprecedented expansion of the extraterritorial scope of the blockade and laid the groundwork for a "change of regime" and subsequent direct intervention in Cuba. No one seems to have noticed that the 2004 "Bush plan for Cuba" has been left by the wayside.

The report of the Secretary-General on this item (A/66/114), which includes the statements of more than 160 countries and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, comprehensively illustrates this continuing and cruel policy and on its direct effects on the people and the economy of Cuba. The direct economic damage caused to the Cuban people as a result of the blockade exceeds $975 billion, estimated at the depreciated United States dollar value compared to that of gold.

Article II, subparagraphs (b) and (c), of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines as acts of genocide "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group" and "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part".

According to a United States Government memorandum of 6 April 1960, the blockade's objectives have been to cause

> "disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship ... to weaken the economic life of Cuba ... denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government."

The United States has never hidden the fact that its objective is to overthrow the revolutionary Government and to destroy the constitutional order that the Cuban people defend in sovereignty. That is what former President George W. Bush called "regime change", which has now acquired new dimensions.

Despite the false image of flexibility that the current United States Administration tries to portray, the blockade and the sanctions remain intact, fully implemented, and their extraterritorial character has intensified in recent years. The increased persecution of Cuban financial transactions across the world, with complete disregard for the laws of third countries and the opposition of their Governments, has become a distinct feature of the Obama Administration.

Cuba is still unable to freely export or import products and services of any sort to and from the United States. Cuba cannot use American dollars in its transactions, not even to pay its contributions to the United Nations and to other international agencies. Nor can Cuba hold accounts in that currency in banks in third countries or have access to credit from banks in the United States or from any of their subsidiaries in third countries or from international institutions, such as the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank.

The ban on trade with American companies' subsidiaries in third countries still cannot be altered. Entrepreneurs from other countries who are interested in investing in my country continue to be sanctioned, threatened or blacklisted.

International organizations and agencies and programmes of the United Nations system are not spared from this policy. The United States Government hinders the cooperation that those entities offer to Cuba, including that intended for extremely sensitive areas. Clear evidence of that is the confiscation in January of $4,207,000 in financing from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to implement projects of cooperation with Cuba, which was intended for combating the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and tuberculosis.

As a result of Cuba's denunciation, the United States Treasury Department issued a general licence in May this year to release those funds. That licence will expire on 30 June 2015. But the very fact that the resources allocated by that humanitarian organization require a United States Government licence to reach Cuba shows — in addition to the intent to use these sensitive programmes as hostages of that Government's aggressive policy against my country — flagrantly disrespectful behaviour towards the United Nations and its various agencies. Several cooperation projects carried out by the International Atomic Energy Agency have also been victims of the blockade.

In the midst of a supposed relaxation that allows some groups of Americans to travel to Cuba, the Treasury Department very recently denied travel permits to two important United States non-governmental organizations that for years have been cooperating with Cuban institutions in the area of health care. That decision could prevent donations of medicines that are unavailable in our country because of the blockade from reaching their destination. The truth is that the freedom of travel of Americans continues to be hampered, and Cuba remains the only forbidden destination.

On several occasions, United States representatives have indicated here that the item we are discussing today is a bilateral issue and therefore should not be discussed in this forum. They are likely to reiterate the same fallacious argument here today. The facts prove the inconsistency. Citizens and companies from numerous Member States represented here have been subject to sanctions for establishing economic relations with Cuba.

What is represented by the fines imposed on 18 August on the subsidiary of the French shipping and transportation company CMA CGM for offering

container services to Cuba, if not the extraterritorial nature of that policy? How could we describe the demands imposed by the European subsidiary of PayPal, which facilitates electronic transactions through the Internet, on the German firm Rum & Company to force it to remove Cuban rum and tobacco from its web page?

There have been countless examples of the extraterritorial implementation of that policy, as can be seen in Cuba's reply contained in the Secretary-General's report.

President Obama's most recent statements about Cuba have left quite a few observers astonished, but they come as no surprise to us. President Obama's response to the Cuban Government's offer of a dialogue on all topics of interest on the bilateral agenda has been, once again, a non-committal refusal, based on absurd arguments and unacceptable conditions that have never worked. His position is old, repetitive and anchored in the past. It is as if, instead the President elected to bring about change, his predecessors were speaking for him, including Republican predecessors. He seemed misinformed, completely unaware of what is going on in our country, of our history and of our culture.

Cuba experienced great change in 1959. At the cost of 20,000 lives, it swept away the dictatorship of Batista, the United States' strongman. Since then, Cuba has continued to change day by day, and thanks to its capacity for renewal it has been able to resist. Others did not resist because they did not change, or because they were inflexible or drifted. Now, Cuba is changing and will resolutely change everything that should be changed within the revolution and within socialism: more revolution and improved socialism. The only thing that has not changed over the past 50 years is the blockade and the hostile and aggressive policy of the United States, despite the fact that it has not worked, nor will it.

However, what the United States Government wants to see changed will not change. The Cuban Government will continue to be the Government of the people, by the people and for the people. Our elections will not be auctions. There will be no $4 billion election campaigns nor a parliament supported by 13 per cent of voters. We will not have corrupt political elites separate from the people. We will continue being a true democracy, not a plutocracy. We will defend the right to true and objective information.

We will continue our fight for full justice. We will protect equal opportunities for every child, and we will not abandon anyone. We will not renounce our social policies. Health and education will continue to be universal and free of charge. We will guarantee the right to work, decent retirement and social security. There will continue to be equal pay for equal work. We will protect pregnant women and the disabled. Human beings will continue to be the first and most important thing. We will defend our culture. We will continue to believe in human values. The exercise of human rights will be fully guaranteed for all Cubans.

The economy will have to be efficient, but it will continue to be in the service of the people. People's lives are, and will continue to be, far more important than macroeconomic data. The people will continue to be consulted on economic policies. The consequences of the global economic crisis will be shared by all. We will continue redistributing wealth so that there are neither rich nor poor. We will not allow corruption or speculation, nor will we steal money from workers to bail out banks. We will continue to seek the participation of foreign companies in our economy without any exceptions.

It would suffice to review the recent disclosures made by Wikileaks about the work of the State Department and American embassies in all countries to hinder political, diplomatic, economic, commercial and cooperative relations with Cuba. They are disgraceful because of their content — the information about the concern, the interest in and persecution of the humanitarian work being carried out by Cuban medical brigades, which nobly and selflessly serve millions of peoples in dozens of sister nations.

Family ties and the limited cultural, academic and scientific exchanges between the United States and Cuba show today what a positive step it would be to expand those links for the benefit of both peoples, without the obstacles and conditions imposed by Washington, D.C. Cuba's proposal for moving towards the normalization of relations and expanding bilateral cooperation in a range of areas still stands. Making reciprocal efforts to resolve pending humanitarian issues would likewise be in our common interest.

Why does President Obama's Administration not better concern itself with the problems of the United

States and leave us Cubans alone to solve ours in peace?

One of the five Cuban antiterrorist fighters has just finished serving every minute of his unjust 13-year prison sentence, yet he is now being prevented from returning to Cuba and reuniting with his family, while the other four continue to endure a cruel and unjust incarceration as political prisoners. The blatant corruption in the legal proceedings and the Government's illegal conduct throughout is widely known and has been well documented. Why not release them as an act of justice, or at least as a humanitarian gesture?

I must convey the profound gratitude of the people of Cuba to all of the countries that for 20 years have used their voices and their votes to call for an end to the most unjust, long-lasting and comprehensive unilateral sanctions in history, which have caused so much harm to millions of Cubans.

I speak on behalf of 16-year-old Guillermo Domínguez Díaz, 18-year-old Ivis Palacio Terry, 17-year-old Randy Barroso Torres, and 12-year-old Adrián Izquierdo Cabrera, who have undergone conservative surgeries and spent months confined to bed, wearing casts, because hospitals have no paediatric expandable prostheses, which are manufactured in the United States or under its patents. I speak on behalf of María Amelia Alonso Valdés, 2 years of age, Damián Hernández Valdés, 4, and Dayán Romayena Lorente, 12, who suffer from central nervous system tumours and who need to be treated with Temodal, a drug manufactured in the United States and protected by its patents. On behalf of my selfless, generous, optimistic and heroic people and for the good of the community of nations and the equilibrium of the world, I ask the Assembly to support draft resolution A/66/L.4, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/66/L.4.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Godard (United States of America): For yet another year, the Assembly is taking up a draft resolution designed to confuse and obscure. But let there be no confusion about this: the United States, like most Member States, reaffirms its strong commitment to supporting the right and the heartfelt desire of the Cuban people to freely determine their future. And let there be no obscuring that the Cuban regime has deprived them of that right for more than half a century.

At the same time, the United States strongly asserts its sovereign right, on the same basis as other Member States, to determine its bilateral policies, including its economic relationships with other countries, in accordance with its own national interests and values. This includes our economic relationships with other countries. The United States' economic relationship with Cuba is a bilateral issue and is not appropriately a concern of the Assembly.

The embargo represents just one aspect of United States policy towards Cuba, whose overarching goal is to encourage a more open environment in Cuba and increased respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms — principles to which this Organization is also dedicated.

This annual exercise attempts to no good end to obscure some fundamental truths. The Cuban Government's own policies, not any action of the United States Government, are the greatest obstacle to Cuba's economic development. Those policies concentrate political and economic decisions in the hands of the few, stifling economic growth. They ignore the basic principles, so effectively demonstrated in many countries, that policies that allow individual freedom unleash the creativity of people, foster innovation and entrepreneurship, and are the best means to achieve sustainable economic development.

This exercise conceals the fact that the United States is a leading source of food and humanitarian aid to Cuba. The United States does not restrict humanitarian aid to Cuba. Cubans receive food, medicine, other forms of assistance and remittances from the United States. In the year 2010, the United States Government authorized $3.5 billion in total sales to Cuba of United States goods. In agricultural products alone, the United States exported $361.7 million in goods to Cuba in 2010, including

poultry, soy bean products, corn, wheat, feed products, pork and other items.

Indeed, as the Cuban Government itself has repeatedly indicated, the United States has for years been one of Cuba's principal trading partners. The United States in 2010 also authorized $861 million in private humanitarian assistance in the form of gift parcels filled with food and other basic necessities, as well as non-agricultural and medical donations. Those figures alone are sufficient to rebut the spurious allegations of genocide against the Cuban people contained in previous resolutions recalled in the current draft (A/66/L.4) and to demonstrate that this calumny greatly misuses that important term and insults the true victims of genocide.

This draft resolution and much of the stale rhetoric surrounding it ignores some basic facts. As President Obama made clear last month, the United States is open to a new relationship with Cuba if the Cuban Government starts taking proper steps to open up its country and provide the space and the respect for human rights that would allow the Cuban people to determine their own destiny. The Cuban Government also needs to release unconditionally and immediately the 62-year-old American citizen Alan Gross, whom it sentenced to 15 years of prison for the crime of trying to connect Cuba's Jewish communities to the Internet.

The President in January 2011 implemented several significant changes to United States policy towards Cuba, aimed at increasing people-to-people contact, supporting civil society in Cuba, enhancing the free flow of information to, from and among the Cuban people and helping promote their independence from Cuban authorities. Those changes build upon the President's previous actions in April 2009 and demonstrate the strong commitment of the United States to the Cuban people, contrary to the picture painted in the draft resolution.

The United States looks forward to a still greater broadening of contacts and exchange with Cuba, and is prepared to do its part to that end. However, improving the situation requires efforts on the part of the Cuban Government as well. It must ensure that the Cuban people enjoy the internationally recognized political and economic freedoms to which this body is committed and on which it has insisted with regard to other countries.

Because the draft resolution does not reflect present realities, my delegation will vote against it. We strongly believe that this body, instead of engaging in such meaningless exercises, should dedicate itself to supporting the efforts of the Cuban people to freely determine their own future. Only by that course can this body truly advance the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): For the twentieth year in a row, the General Assembly will deliver its judgement and demand an end to the criminal and inhumane blockade against the heroic, generous people and Government of Cuba. Yet again, we have heard a representative of the United States of America attempt to justify that which cannot be justified in order to force the submission of a people that will never submit, a people whose resolve is absolute — a people, as Commandante Fidel recently remarked, whose will is made of steel.

Nicaragua would like once again to publically express its commitment to and support for the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/66/L.4), which was introduced by our colleague Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, to whom we express our unconditional solidarity and our gratitude for the updated information on the damage and prejudicial harm that the United States of America continues to inflict on the Cuban people with the most criminal blockade in the history of humanity.

Nicaragua expresses its eternal gratitude to the Cuban people and Government for their unwavering and unconditional militant solidarity whose primary goal is to help countries in development. We also wish to thank Commandante Fidel Castro, who joined forces with Commandante Chávez to undertake a great project of solidarity, reciprocity, social justice, fair trade, life and peace in our Latin America and the Caribbean that is today embodied in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America.

The fruits of that project are palpable and undeniable in the form of reduced poverty, the near eradication of illiteracy, the millions of people whose sight has been restored thanks to Misión Milagros, and the medical and scientific brigades that have improved the quality of life in our countries. Those are just a few of the accomplishments achieved in a short time, and

despite the impact of the criminal embargo and of the international crisis generated and created by the capitalist economies.

The peoples and Governments of the world represented here will always stand with Cuba, our brother country and brother Government. We recognize its heroism, its solidarity, its humanism, its generosity and its commitment at those moments when our peoples have needed the friendly hand of brothers and sisters. Who else but Cuba has been the first to step forward when one of our peoples has had a need and sought unconditional human solidarity, whether in matters of health or education, or in the face of the blows of climate change?

It is precisely because of the determination of the Cuban people and Government always to stand with the world's poor that they are being attacked and blockaded and that their Socialist revolution is threatened with destruction.

This inhumane policy of the United States Government, which is continuing to implement this criminal embargo against the brotherly and beloved people and Government of Cuba, must end now. It has been clearly shown that no one supports these measures, which are aimed at breaking the spirit of independence, self-determination and international solidarity that is characteristic of the Cuban people and Government. It is time to rectify the situation, as these measures violate international law, human rights, humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. It is time that an end be put to the belief that they will break the steely resolve and the social spirit of the Cuban revolution.

Even the people of the United States do not support the embargo. Every day more voices are being heard from that country demanding that an end be put to this absurd and inhumane policy. One such United States voice calling for peace and reconciliation was that of Reverend Lucius Walker, whom we warmly remember for his determined humanism dedicated to putting an end to the blockade against Cuba, along with the Pastors for Peace and their Peace Caravans.

Latin America and the Caribbean strongly support Cuba, which is resolutely and firmly, in a spirit of creativity, resisting the embargo — this outdated policy of intervention in our region. Our region will go forward, hand in hand with its sister country Cuba, until the Government of the United States reflects on and rectifies its historic error.

The United States, by not implementing the resolutions of the General Assembly, is continuing to worsen the suffering of the brotherly Cuban people. The priority sectors most affected by the embargo are public health, food and education.

There have been other major economic sanctions and other forms of persecution against Cuban business and financial transactions. Nothing has changed that would lighten the burden on the people of Cuba. On the contrary, there has been a strengthening of the policy of strangulation against Cuba. The embargo remains the main obstacle to the economic and social development of Cuba. It is high time for the United States to put an end to this criminal embargo and also to stop helping self-confessed terrorists who continue to move freely in North American cities and together plan terrorist acts against the people and the Government of Cuba.

No longer is anyone fooled by the more than 50 years of terrorist acts against the people and the Government of Cuba. A gesture would be welcomed by the people of the world would be the immediate freeing of the four Cuban heroic patriots imprisoned in the United States and the immediate return to his homeland of the heroic René González, who has been on conditional release but must remain in the United States for years. This is an offence against justice not to free these heroes, who have defended their country with dignity and courage in the face of terrorist attacks perpetrated from the territory of the United States of America. We demand the immediate release of these Cuban anti-terrorist heroes. We convey our Sandinista greetings to them and to their families, and our immense respect for these brothers, sons of Martí and of the unwavering Cuban revolution.

We would like to express once again our strongest condemnation of the embargo against Cuba and of all coercive measures of a unilateral nature with extraterritorial effect, which contravene international law and the accepted norms of free trade. These are practices that not only pose a grave threat to peace and multilateralism and represent an insult to human values; they are also an obstacle to mutual understanding among and the well-being of nations. We thus condemn the use of unilateral coercive measures such as illegal sanctions against developing

countries aimed at preventing them from exercising their right to determine their own political, economic and social system.

Once again Nicaragua will vote in favour of draft resolution A/66/L.4, as will almost the entire international community represented here. We will be witnesses once again of the isolation of the Government of the United States and of its policy of always being on the opposite side of those who wish for peace. The international community will thus reiterate once again its message of peace and its strong support for Cuba in defence of its sovereignty and self-determination and in defence of its heroic revolution.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.4.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau

Draft resolution A/66/L.4 was adopted by 186 votes to 2, with 3 abstentions (resolution 66/6).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Sweden advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Sobków (Poland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this explanation of vote.

Mr. Archondo (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The United States trade policy towards Cuba is fundamentally a bilateral issue. However, American legislation, such as the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, has extended the effects of the United States embargo to third-party countries. In the framework of its Common Commercial Policy, the European Union has firmly and continuously opposed such extraterritorial measures.

While recognizing the decision of the United States Government to lift restrictions on remittances and family travel to Cuba, we cannot accept that unilaterally imposed measures impede our economic and commercial relations with Cuba. To address this problem, the European Union Council of Ministers adopted, in November 1996, a regulation and a joint action to protect the interests of natural or legal persons residing in Europe against the consequences of these Acts. Furthermore, at the May 1998 European Union-United States summit, held in London, a package was agreed that also sought to alleviate the problems with extraterritorial legislation. It covered waivers to titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, a commitment by the United States Government to resist future extraterritorial legislation of that kind, and an understanding regarding disciplines for the strengthening of investment protection. It is urgent that the United States implement that agreement.

The European Union's policy towards Cuba was set out in a common position in 1996. Reaffirming the validity of that common position, in June 2008 the European Union lifted the restrictive measures imposed on Cuba in 2003. The dialogue with the authorities in Havana was resumed without preconditions and on the basis of reciprocity and non-discrimination. Five political dialogue ministerial sessions have been held with the Cuban Government to address issues of common interest, including human rights, which is a question at the core of relations with all third countries, including Cuba.

We reaffirm our determination to pursue a results-oriented comprehensive dialogue with the Cuban authorities, as well as with representatives of civil society and peaceful pro-democracy opposition, in accordance with EU policies. We reiterate the right of Cuban citizens to independently decide their future.

We are encouraged by the release of all political prisoners from the group of 75 who were imprisoned in 2003, together with other political prisoners. We reiterate our call on the Cuban Government to fully grant its citizens internationally recognized civil, political and economic rights and freedoms, including the freedom of assembly and expression and free access to information; to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and, following the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, to extend invitations to other rapporteurs to visit Cuba.

The existing restrictions on rights and freedoms undermine and offset Cuban achievements in health care and education. Similarly, Cuba's domestic economic policy seriously hampers its own economic development. In that context, we note the adoption by the Cuban Parliament in August of a package of economic and social reforms, and expect that these will be extended and implemented in a manner that will address the key concerns of the Cuban population.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States contributes to the economic problems in Cuba, negatively affecting the living standards of the Cuban people. The European Union therefore believes that the lifting of the United States embargo would open the Cuban economy to the benefit of the Cuban people. Together, we again express our rejection of all unilateral measures directed against Cuba that are contrary to the commonly accepted rules of international trade. We urge the Cuban authorities to bring about real improvements in all areas mentioned.

In spite of continued concerns and criticisms about the human rights situation in Cuba, the States members of the European Union unanimously voted in favour of resolution 66/6.

Ms. Nujoma (Namibia): This year marks the twentieth anniversary since the presentation of the resolution that we have just adopted (resolution 66/6), but the blockade against Cuba is still in place. This stands in stark contrast to the overwhelming appeal by the international community to end this unjust policy against the people of Cuba. In fact, this debate would not have been necessary had the United States lifted the blockade years ago.

My delegation voted in favour of the resolution under agenda item 41, "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", because we believe in the principle of peaceful coexistence among nations, respect for sovereign equality, open trade among nations and, above all, the spirit of good-neighbourliness. The imposition of the blockade against Cuba is an outdated form of punishment.

My delegation remains concerned about the promulgation and application of laws and measures constituting an economic, commercial or financial embargo against any friendly and peaceful country. We believe that the measures imposed against Cuba have serious negative implications for the overall development and well-being of the people of Cuba.

For many years, the General Assembly has, through its resolutions on this item, consistently rejected those sanctions and called for an end to the embargo imposed by the United States against the people of Cuba. The blockade is negatively affecting the economy and people of Cuba, especially women and children. It is therefore unfortunate that, today, the blockade remains intact and that the General Assembly is still seized of this issue.

My delegation has always maintained the view that the blockade against Cuba runs counter to the spirit of the United Nations Charter, international law and the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2). The same blockade continues to cause irreparable damage to the economic, social and cultural development of Cuba, as it deprives its people of the opportunities and benefits emanating from free trade.

The Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts are extraterritorial in nature and thus interfere with the sovereign rights of Cuba and violate the principles and rules of the international trading system. The blockade cannot be called an exclusive bilateral affair because it impacts numerous countries. The report of the Secretary-General highlights those points of concern.

We are convinced that the people of the two neighbouring countries would both stand to benefit from the normalization of relations and the removal of restrictions between them. The United States Government should therefore heed the appeal of the international community to end the blockade and promote good relations and neighbourliness with the Government and the people of Cuba.

In our view, all human rights, whether political, cultural or economic, are inseparable. They include the right to food, health and education and, above all, the right to development. Through the blockade, the people of Cuba are being denied those fundamental rights, just because of the political system they have chosen.

Guided by our conviction that the blockade against Cuba is a denial of the rights I have just highlighted, Namibia voted in favour of the draft resolution on ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. We did so to express our solidarity with the people of Cuba, and we hope that the United States will listen to the international community's appeal to end the blockade against Cuba.

Mr. Kapambwe (Zambia): Every time the issue of lifting the United States sanctions on Cuba comes up, I am reminded of Humpty Dumpty, who said, "Words mean only that which I want them to mean".

When we talk about democracy, what is democracy, if the universal resolutions of the General Assembly that call on the United States to lift the sanctions on Cuba are routinely ignored? When we talk about the rule of law, what is the rule of law, if General Assembly resolutions that have declared United States sanctions illegal continue to be ignored? Is the law a law only when one decides that it is law? When we talk about the sovereign equality of States in the United Nations, is it equality only when it involves those whom we like? When we talk about freedom, is it freedom only when the views and political systems of other countries agree with one's own?

I thought that true democracy and true freedom embrace diversity: diversity of opinion, of thought, of political systems. Indeed, freedom also includes the right even to be wrong. My delegation has voted in favour of resolution 66/6 because that is the right thing to do.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.